

Juanita S. Dilley
Pocahontas Co.
Chapter 4, Section 4b - 3
Averills Retreat

Every man and boy they could find they arrested. These prisoners were taken to the Academy building and the building was crowded with them. Alvin Clark, Andrew Price's, father-in-law was among these prisoners and Mr. Price got much of his information from him as he was held captive for three days. The soldiers were desperate and weary, but there was great vigilance and discipline maintained. The one question was "Is there any road to Edray so as to miss Marlin's Bottom?" And no man could tell him of any road. It was a matter of utmost importance. Hillsboro was in the Confederacy. Edray, fifteen miles north was in the Union. What Averill wanted was to reach Edray without chance of meeting a Confederate army at Marlin's Bottom where a road from the east comes in, but there was no detour, and next morning he was on his way. His reports say that "On my way to Edray my rear guard experienced some trifling attacks on Dec. 22nd" This referred to some very distant shots from the bush by some bush-whackers who hung on the flanks of the army.

Prisoners say they were very cautious and fearful as they approached Marlin's Bottom, but when the bridge at that place had been safely passed their spirits rose and they seemed to be freed from all fear of being captured.

Once at Edray, all discipline was relaxed and even the sentinels slept the sleep of exhaustion. It is said that a hundred men could have captured the whole army.

No particular attention was paid to the prisoners, and most of them quietly withdrew in the night time and the next morning the rest of them were told to go home. Alvin Clark says Averill told him that it appeared his family had more need of him than did the Union army and that he could go home. Averill spent the night at Edray in the brick house which stood where the house of William Sharp later stood. Most of the prisoners were impressed with the boyish appearance of Averill. By that time his name had become a household word in the mountains

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of W. Va., and he had the reputation of a most powerful and effective war lord. They expected him to be an older man.

On the 23rd he began the journey across Elk back to Beverly and safety. The roads were glazed with ice. The men had to dismount and pull the artillery by hand part of the way. But they got back with all their equipment.

For endurance, courage, strength and pluck this experience of an army of 2,500 is perhaps without parallel. Why much was not made of it is hard to figure out. For the work of these 2,500 who split the Confederacy wide open and overcome the resistance of the forces of men and nature seems that of supermen. Historians have practically ignored it. All the publicity it got at the time was from the Richmond papers and that was ridicule heaped on the Confederate forces, when no less than seven Confederate armies allowed one little Union army to cut through their lines, destroy two hundred thousand bushels of grain and other stores, tear up a railroad, and then to escape without capture.

The government recognized his campaign as a brilliant achievement, though the escape was due to pure luck, the Confederates having taken the wrong road. However, their reward was a new suit and a new pair shoes, for each of the men, to replace those worn out on the march. (From History of Pocahontas - Price Pocahontas Times Apr. 26, 1923. Written by Andrew Price.)

This march was made from New Creek in Hampshire County to Beverly by way of Salem, a distance of around 400 miles in 17 days, and in the winter time.

Union Soldiers

There were Union soldiers from this County who went out and joined other Companies and regiments who were mostly under the commands of General Milroy and General Sheridan. All the names that are available are as follows:

Akers Thomas,

Arbogast Brown,

Arbogast George,
Buzzard Armenius,
Curry John,

Cutlip William,

Duffield William

Duncan William
Dilly Clark,

Kellison Clark,

Kellison Andrew,

Kee James,

McCarty Peter,

Moore, David,

Moore Joseph,

Sharp Jerimiah

Sharp Milton,

Slaton John,

(Shears David)

(Rider James)

Wanless Andrew,

Wanless Nelson,

Wanless John F

A4 Sharp
Family History
5 files -
By Ward Sharp

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